

Safe Rooms Save Lives

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BATON ROUGE, La. – Every year, tornadoes, hurricanes, and other extreme windstorms injure and kill people, and cause millions of dollars' worth of property damage in the United States. Most homes, even new ones constructed according to current building codes, do not provide adequate protection for occupants seeking refuge from these events. Having a safe room built for your home or community can help provide near-absolute protection for you, your family, or the public.

You are invited to learn about building a safe room in Louisiana by attending a free webinar. It will be offered twice - at 1 p.m. and again at 6 p.m. on Thursday, May 27. Sign up at <https://fema.connectsolutions.com/saferoomla/>.

A safe room is a hardened structure specifically designed to meet FEMA criteria and provide near-absolute protection in extreme weather events, including tornadoes and hurricanes. Near-absolute protection means that the occupants of a safe room built according to FEMA guidance will have a high probability of being protected from injury or death from wind and wind-borne debris loads on your house.

Don't trade one danger for another. Safe rooms should not be constructed where flood waters have the potential to endanger occupants. Safe rooms in areas where flooding may occur during hurricanes should not be occupied during a hurricane. However, occupying such a safe room during a tornado may be acceptable if the safe room will not be flooded by rains associated with other storm and tornado events. Contact your local building officials for local permitting requirements.

A safe room should not be used when an evacuation is ordered.

To decide if your family needs a safe room, FEMA has information available in its publication [Taking Shelter from the Storm - Building or Installing a Safe Room for Your Home \(fema.gov\)](#). Information on converting a room in your home to a safe room is found on pages 25-26. Retrofitting a safe room is more difficult and expensive than having one built in a new home.

If you have a safe room, FEMA recommends that you tell your local fire department or



local officials the location so that they can check to make sure you are not trapped inside by debris after a storm.

The basic cost to design and construct a safe room during the construction of a new home ranges from approximately \$8,000 to \$17,000, depending on the size constructed, or about the same cost as installing a home air conditioning system.

FEMA encourages schools, businesses, and mobile home communities, among others, to build group shelters if they are in areas subject to extreme-wind events.

Technical information on FEMA standards for building both residential and large-scale safe rooms is given in the updated FEMA publication [Safe Rooms for Tornadoes and Hurricanes: Guidance for Community and Residential Safe Rooms](#).

Individual homeowners do not apply directly to FEMA for safe room funding. FEMA provides Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) funding to eligible states, tribes, and territories that, in turn, provide the funding to local governments to assist in reducing overall risk to people and property.

A State Hazard Mitigation Officer (SHMO) can answer questions regarding project eligibility and financial assistance and provide detailed information on funding sources. In Louisiana, visit Gohsep.la.gov.

Another resource for questions regarding safe room funding is FEMA's HMA Grants Helpline, which can be contacted by calling 1-866-222-3580.

For the latest information on Hurricane Laura, visit fema.gov/disaster/4559. For the latest information on Hurricane Delta, visit fema.gov/disaster/4570. For the latest information for Hurricane Zeta, visit fema.gov/disaster/4577. For the latest information on February's Winter Storms, visit fema.gov/disaster/4590. Follow the FEMA Region 6 Twitter account at twitter.com/FEMARegion6.

